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Imagined Immunities: Abjection, Contagion and the Neoliberal Debt Economy

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ABSTRACT This paper addresses the pervasiveness of contagion as a structure of feeling by putting Maurizio Lazzarato's biopolitics of indebtedness in dialogue with Roberto Esposito's insight that debt is the very condition of both community and its dialectical opposite, immunity. Where Esposito does not sufficiently engage the role of financialized or neoliberal capitalism within the contemporary crisis, Lazzarato develops a Marxian account of debt that complements Esposito's "immunitarian biopolitics," revealing it as an intrinsically capitalist one, and allows us to ground it in contemporary power structures through Marx's figure of M-M'.

Abjection: Two "Chiral" Scenarios

In the 2009 science fiction film *Surrogates* (Jonathan Mostow), an implausible 98% of the world's inhabitants interact with one another using remote-controlled, humanoid robotic avatars known, eponymously, as "surrogates." From the "comfort and safety of their own homes," we are told, people experience the world, including the company of others, "without risk of disease or injury," such that violent crime and communicable disease have "dropped to record lows."¹ The premise, if on the one hand a logical extrapolation of our tendency to buffer social interactions through emails, text messages, social media, and the like, nonetheless raises a few vexing questions (not least logistical ones), but it also speaks to something more deeply entrenched in the forms of subjectivity and social life proper to late capitalist modernity, projecting its particular biopolitics onto a fantasized future.

To wit, a scenario in which people continue to occupy a shared space, but from within the security and isolation of their own private dwellings, is one of total *immunity*—not just in the biomedical sense (e.g., from airborne threats like toxins and disease), or even from criminal violence, but also from the sheer inconvenience of encounters with other persons and the corresponding obligations that ensue. Indeed it is in this quite precise sense that I invoke Roberto Esposito's etymological inquiry into the term, according to which *munus* denotes a duty, obligation, or debt, and the prefix *im-*, therefore, an exemption from such, with the juridical usage predating the medical one by a few centuries at least.² In this reading too, its dialectical counterpart, *community*, points to a *shared* obligation or debt that in its constitutive un-payability, and in the modern context of secularization and individualization, demands the erection of an "apparatus of immunization"³ that for Western modernity comprises the *dispositifs* of property, liberty, and civil and political rights.⁴ Premised on "the proper"—and by extension on its cognates, such as *property* and *proprietary individualism*—this "immunitarian biopolitics" is specifically a capitalist one, most effectively given form in the market, where subjects are enjoined to participate in social and economic exchange without exposing themselves to "obligation" in either its existential sense or the hierarchical one demanded by feudalism.

For Esposito's contemporary Luigino Bruni, indeed, it is precisely the "rationale of the market" that points, in theory, to the kind of futuristic vision depicted in *Surrogates*.⁵

Bruni asks us to imagine a world in which

each family has its own house acoustically and visually isolated from others . . . the few remaining skyscrapers are constructed so as to avoid all encounters on the stairs or on the landings; . . . office and workplace communications are solely via email . . . Conflicts have been eliminated because the precondition for conflict, that is, the need to maintain a common ground, has itself been eliminated.⁶

Though robotic avatars are not included in Bruni's vision, *Surrogates* plays out the culmination of Esposito's "immunitarian biopolitics," bringing the immunitary right to carve out "one's own" from "the common"⁷ to the point where *community*, conceived as a subjective threshold or rupture,⁸ is safely reconfigured as pure simulacrum, to be navigated and withdrawn from at will by fully "immune" individuals safely ensconced in their homes.

Needless to say, events take an unfortunate turn. Inevitably people's surrogates start getting "killed," and ultimately all of them, mutually networked as they are, fall victim to (of all things) a virus. In a particularly jarring scene towards the end, a bustling rush-hour crowd of surrogates collapses *en masse* as a total systemic failure takes hold; subsequent scenes depict a cityscape strewn with these ambiguous "bodies," cars veering helplessly into one another and onto sidewalks. Offices, subways, and shops are littered with uncanny/abjected figures that we "know" not to confuse with their actual human operators, but that deploy nonetheless the semiotics of a large-scale and properly human catastrophe. Indeed it is at precisely this moment that the remote-controlled avatars are most uncannily similar to their more familiar biohorror counterparts, the virally transformed ex-humans or "zombies" whose fate is to be slaughtered without hesitation or regret. Indeed the same, eerie "posthuman" silence hangs over these abjected, slaughtered figures in scenes from, for instance, *The Walking Dead* as over the abruptly disabled avatars of *Surrogates*. And the resonance between the two ostensibly disparate scenarios, I believe, suggests that the total immunity of Bruni's extrapolative vision, and the total contagion of the more Hobbesian, post-apocalyptic one, may be anything but mutually exclusive.

This resonance might be described as "chiral," in the sense of that "mirroring" property of certain chemical compounds that, while identical, are non-superimposable and have very different effects. I have previously borrowed this term from an early episode of *Breaking Bad* in which a chemistry lecture delivered by the protagonist, Walter White, foreshadows his transformation from hapless, insolvent family man to criminal mastermind,⁹ and used it to read the criminal underworld of that series as an inverted mirror-image of our own, late capitalist or neoliberal world.¹⁰ In the present context, "chirality" helps to illuminate how a "structure of feeling" in which an excess of immunity (*Surrogates*) is "mirrored" by its catastrophic opposite (e.g., *The Walking Dead*) derives from a particular moment in late capitalism, namely, the ascendancy of what Maurizio Lazzarato calls the "neoliberal debt economy."¹¹

If it seems counterintuitive to read Esposito's poststructuralist take on immunity—for which "debt" is of an existential nature—alongside Lazzarato's autonomist Marxist reading of a more distinctly financial debt, it is nonetheless on the plane of the biopolitical that the two can be articulated together. The linchpin is what Esposito conceives as the *dispositif* of "the proper," expressed in, among other things, the relation of *ownership* that, under capitalist modernity, comes to ground the whole complex of "immunitary" rights in the structural and symbolic order of private property (including, of course, capital). Esposito's "immunitarian"—and in principle egalitarian—biopolitics is indeed distinctly capitalist,

coming into its own, so to speak, just as “individualistic models” of social organization begin taking the place of communitarian ones.¹² For Lazzarato, in turn, it is precisely property (a modality of the proper) that under conditions of financialization is “deterritorialized” into the realm of capital securities and debt instruments.¹³ In the process, I would argue, the “immunitary” mediations of Western modernity as described by Esposito, and grounded as they are in “the proper,” are deterritorialized as well. Yet neoliberal ideology doubles down in its insistence on, precisely, the immunitary functions of ownership, i.e. property, as the foundation of existential security, even as the generalized crisis precipitated by financialization exposes more and more citizens to the risks of precarity and expropriation. Herein lies the “chiral” center between visions of total immunity on the one hand and total contagion on the other. As a structure of feeling—the articulation of affective investments and tensions pointing to the “omissions,” the “consequences, as lived”¹⁴ of otherwise “formally held and systematic beliefs,”¹⁵ namely those of the “ownership society” promulgated by these ideologies—this tension between immunity and contagion expresses a crisis in the *dispositif* of the proper, in the mediation between power and life.

In the following pages, I will review the salience of the contagion metaphor in particular, and flesh out Esposito’s claims about immunity and the “immunized community” as the biopolitical objective of Western capitalist modernity. But where Esposito’s otherwise immensely productive inquiry tends to bracket the function of capitalism in this immunitary configuration, I will turn to Lazzarato’s biopolitics of debt, with particular attention to the shift from the Marxian equation for capitalist accumulation (M-C-M’) to that for financial accumulation (M-M’) as encoding the dissolution of “C” as a modality of the proper with an “immunitary” function. The figure of “human capital” that emerges in this financialized biopolitics is not just the “productive” one of Foucauldian theory (the “entrepreneur of the self”) but also a liminal and constitutively exposed one for whom immunity is both an inescapable imperative and an utter impossibility, and it is the inevitable anxieties arising from this condition of perpetual exposure that find their cultural mediations not only in biohorror but in the pervasive sense of crisis that permeates contemporary politics.

Contagion as the ‘Hermeneutics of Everything’

There is no question that contagion has in recent years taken on the function of what Angela Mitropoulos calls a “hermeneutics of everything.”¹⁶ What Greg Bird and Jonathan Short call the “crisis of the proper” is one in which *contact* in all of its forms threatens the ontological integrity of the subject, from body to body politic.¹⁷ Diseases, chemicals, vaccinations, endocrine disruptors, glutes, and parabens threaten bodily boundaries and the systems internal to them, while distracted driving, sexting, obesity, drug abuse, and mass shootings take on “epidemic” proportions at a social level, and while terrorism and climate change threaten to breach our best defenses on the national and the global scale alike. Though body panic and its analogues are nothing new, what seems to distinguish the present is the way in which disparate threats merge together, generating a permanent immunological state of exception that promises no return to any norm;¹⁸ indeed it is difficult to imagine a future in which immunological boundaries would need to be anything but perpetually reinforced. Bird and Short’s “crisis of the proper,” indeed, entails a sense that “everything is . . . brought into proximity and correlation” and that “nothing . . . can be effectively isolated, insulated [and] immunized as proper to itself”;¹⁹ the loss of sovereignty individual, popular and national, the breakdown of the law’s protective or immunizing function, the implosion of the symbolic order of liberal-democratic capitalism, and the concomitant exposure to violence and expropriation would seem to implicate the

very ontology of the modern subject, above and beyond any particular ideological commitments.

Modern subjectivity is for Esposito an “invention” of modernity’s “immunization paradigm,” starting with the Hobbesian social contract whereby persons relinquished their acquisitive instincts in exchange for sovereign protection; “immunity” in this context means the legally protected right to mark out “one’s own,” institutionalized in property, liberty, and civil and political rights. If “community” denotes not a positive entity but a liminal space between self and non-self, with the *munus* a threshold of exposure and contamination binding the subject to an unchosen debt,²⁰ then the modern Western subject is invented as an insulated one for whom the dangers of that threshold have been neutralized, and who is thereby relieved of any such debt. To be clear, there is no golden-ageism here connecting a “genuine” community (as “shared obligation”) to some pre-capitalist utopia—the “debts” of feudalism were non-reciprocal and rigidly hierarchical, “immunizing” those at the top from the contaminations to which the rest were constitutively exposed (or, to put it another way, the “immunized community” eluded us long before capitalism and will probably do so long after).²¹ But what distinguishes a specifically *capitalist* “immunitarian biopolitics” is that the “law’s protection of [the subject’s] *possessive* capacity”—the capacity, precisely, to withdraw from community—becomes, under capitalism, the very condition of community as such.²² Thus, Esposito reads *immunitas* dialectically with *communitas* as its negative but constitutively enabling form, operating very much by the logic of medical immunization.²³ In order to survive, he claims, a community “[introjects] the negative modality of its opposite,” in this case, in the form of proprietary individualism.²⁴ It is perhaps in Rousseau’s social contract rather than Hobbes’ that the dialectic can be seen to function most seamlessly, perfectly harmonizing sacrifice with sovereignty. As Terry Eagleton explains, “[i]f all citizens alienate their rights entirely to the community, ‘each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody’, and so receives himself back again as a free, autonomous being.”²⁵

For 20th century capitalism, it is the postwar compromise between capitalism and labour that comes closest to enacting this immunitary vision. But the dialectic is now, it would seem, irreparably broken; in Esposito’s words, “we are no longer inside the immunitary semantics of the classical modern period,” and the mediation “between politics and the preservation of life” has now “[diminished] in favour of a more immediate superimposition between power and life.”²⁶ Esposito describes the contemporary crisis as a consequence of “excessive demands” for immunity in a globalized world, with the “small walls” erected by various fundamentalisms replacing the Cold War’s “Big Wall” as an immunitary “counterweight” to the increasing interpenetration of (imagined) communities and cultures.²⁷ If there is some truth to this, it nevertheless fails to account for globalization as a specifically *capitalist* project, and now more than ever a financialized one. It is curious, too, that an entire philosophical *oeuvre* that turns on the question of debt overlooks the possibility that *debt in its neoliberal specificity* may have something to do with the contemporary erosion of the “mediations” between power and life that modernity’s “immunitarian biopolitics” had put into place. This is not to suggest a one-to-one correspondence between the existential debt of the human condition as such and the financial debt that pervades contemporary capitalist power; one is the condition for social life in any and all of its forms while the other is indelibly stamped with the specificities of our late-capitalist age.

But the two meet nonetheless in the nexus of the proper. If “immunity” turns on property, and finance “deterritorializes” the latter, then the indebtedness that Lazzarato calls the “most universal [condition] of modern-day capitalism”²⁸ might be placed in dialogue with Esposito’s immunitarian biopolitics in order to “tell a better story”²⁹ about the

contemporary crisis, one that figures in, among other things, the “chiral” tension between immunitary and contagion with which I started out.³⁰

Lazzarato, like Esposito, sees a biopolitics at work in the *dispositif* of property, and thus a “biopolitics of indebtedness” wrought by its deterritorialization under the latest round of financialization. The story he tells is a familiar one among critics of neoliberalism: the abandonment of the gold standard and the Bretton Woods agreement effectively undercut the state’s monetary sovereignty and “[brought] together a neoliberal alliance” that has “systematically taken aim at the logic of the Welfare State”³¹—a configuration in which the state imposed some limits and redistributive pressures on private capital, and which Zygmunt Bauman, notably, referred to as the “ultimate modern embodiment of the idea of community.”³² Sovereignty—once the guarantor of immunity—is increasingly the prerogative of the “Universal Creditor,”³³ which, with the dismantling of regulatory frameworks, comes to impose the same burdens on the state as it does on individual citizens, compelling it, through discipline, evaluation, and metrics-based assessment, to abandon its “immunitary” functions. The “social rights” that mitigated the asymmetry of the capital-labor relationship are eclipsed by “social debt,”³⁴ with access to state services a question no longer of “right” but “eligibility,” measured always under suspicion and in the shadow of a Nietzschean “bad conscience.”³⁵ The creditor-debtor relation displaces, indeed, that between capital and labor, as stagnant wages force a large-scale turn to consumer credit, replacing the collective struggle over wages with a more atomized, solitary one over repayment terms and interest rates.³⁶ Debt, for Lazzarato, is not just a supplement to commodity capitalism but the “economic and subjective engine of the modern day economy” as well as the “strategic heart of neoliberal politics,” representing a “transversal power relation unimpeded by State boundaries, the dualism of production . . . and the distinctions between the economy, the political, and the social.”³⁷ In other words, it erodes the “immunitary” mediations between power and life, insofar as these are taken to reside in the modern state’s obligation towards its citizens.

Debt’s particular biopolitics—its assault on the ontology of the always-already immunized subject of modernity—is more fully explained in an early essay by Karl Marx that Lazzarato cites at length, namely, “Comments on James Mill, *Éléments d’économie politique*.” For Marx, capitalism makes the medium of (commodity) money already an alienating one, “[estranging] from man” the “human, social act by which man’s products mutually complement one another”;³⁸ yet for the classical political economy that is the object of Marx’s critique, this estrangement is undone by the credit relation, given its ostensible foundation in *trust*. It appears, in the credit relation, “as though the power of the alien, material force were broken . . . and man had once more human relations to man.”³⁹ To be sure, Marx asserts, this “trust” is only an illusion, for, in actual fact, in credit “the dehumanization is all the more infamous and extreme because its element is no longer commodity, metal, paper, but man’s *moral* existence, man’s *social* existence, the *inmost depths* of his heart.”⁴⁰ Trust, in other words, has nothing to do with what Lazzarato calls “some noble sentiment toward oneself, others, and the world” but is rather “limited to a trust in solvency, [making] solvency the content and measure of the ethical relationship.”⁴¹ This is even more the case when, for Marx, a “rich man gives credit to a poor man” instead of a capitalist borrower:

the life of the poor man and his talents and activity serve the rich man as a *guarantee* of the repayment of the money lent . . . All the social virtues of the poor man, the content of his vital activity, his existence itself, represent for the rich man the reimbursement of his capital with the customary interest.”⁴²

Thus credit appropriates, through debt, “not only the physical and intellectual abilities the poor man employs in his labor, but also his social and existential forces”;⁴³ man becomes “a *mediator* of exchange, not however as a man, but as the *mode of existence of capital* and interest.”⁴⁴ Lazzarato offers the wording that connects debt in the monetary sense with Esposito’s *munus* or existential obligation. What the credit relation exploits is “‘existential’ life,” with “existence” meaning the “power of self-affirmation, the forces of self-positioning, the choices that found and bear with them modes and styles of life”—to wit, “*the ethico-political constitution of the self and the community*.”⁴⁵

Even at the most stripped-down level of the credit relation, its encoding in the Marxian equation M-M’, the analysis holds true. The market’s promise of “immunized” exchange was predicated on the equation for simple circulation, C-M-C, occluding, necessarily, the persistent, deep-structural asymmetries built into M-C-M’ (which of course has never entailed a remotely equitable distribution of immunity).⁴⁶ As Marx well knew, labour power becomes a commodity only under “definite, historically developed conditions” that make subsistence conditional on its sale and exploitation.⁴⁷ Yet, the fact that alienation and precarity have always been the generalized experience of capitalism—that immunity, in other words, has always been exclusive—should not deter us from conceiving the conjuncture as a dissolution of the latter. If property and its modalities are central to the immunitarian biopolitics of Western modernity, then the “failure of proprietary individualism” most recently and visibly exposed in 2008 portends a crisis that is more than just “financial.”⁴⁸ For even in M-C-M’, with “C” encoded as commodity or commodity labour power, property remained “territorialized,” embedded within a productive economy in which it could be exchanged, even if under duress. The “C” as the “mediating” space of value production necessarily incorporated the capacities of living labour and was thus also the site of the “long, frenetic uphill struggle” that brought capitalist modernity to its “golden age” in the imperfect “compromise” of Keynesianism.⁴⁹ But the displacement of the capital-labor relation by that between creditor and debtor erodes the “mediating” C and disperses it among an atomized and disenfranchised precariat; in this, the function of the property, along with those of its modalities around which this “struggle” was fought—protections, wages, rights—is catastrophically undone. As Mario Tronti once observed, the history of capitalism consists in its drive to “[emancipate] itself from the working class,”⁵⁰ and the disembedding of property from the productive economy and its dissolution in the formula for “self-valorizing money,” M-M’,⁵¹ brings this ultimate objective that much closer. In the process, the “sovereign individual” of Western modernity is left increasingly exposed, with immunity increasingly the privilege of the creditors.⁵²

Monetary debt thus inscribes itself along the fault-line of originary debt, the threshold of the *munus*, the exposure to the “other-than-self” that the immunitary mechanisms of modernity maintained in a state of “regulated permeability.” Dissolving the mediating C, it inscribes itself as pure and unmediated alienation, forcing the debtor to concede to the creditor not only his instincts but his person itself, exposing it unbearably to the appetites of an always more powerful Other. What the debtor cedes to the creditor, in effect, is her immunity. Disarticulated from community, immunity is now concentrated in the privileges and protections enjoyed by the wealthiest: exemption from regulatory requirements across all sectors, including those most directly destructive of the natural environment; exemption from accountability vis-a-vis what remains of the commons; exemption from levels of taxation that once ensured a degree of existential security to all citizens, these latter now left to manage this burden on their own, with all of its risks and liabilities. Nothing encodes the exclusivity of this privilege more succinctly than the very phrase “too big to fail,” which marks the synthesis of total immunity with structural power and exposes the “immunized community” for the chimera that it is.⁵³

If the “immunized community” has not been realized at any stage of capitalist social relations yet encountered, nonetheless the discourse of neoliberalism, obsessed as it is with “ownership,” keeps the dream alive and well. The discourse of the “ownership society” advanced by George W. Bush, exhorting Americans to “empower” themselves and exercise more “choice” and “control” over their futures not only by purchasing real estate but by shrewdly managing their health care and pension plans, extended the immunitary promise of the proper into the very realm of existential security that the proverbial 1% were busily dismantling.⁵⁴ It also produces the figure of “human capital” in its Foucauldian sense as the “entrepreneur” encouraged to “invest” in itself in order to secure its future value.⁵⁵

The biopolitics of indebtedness, however, produces a more sinister form of “human capital,” one that brings us back to the question of contagion with which this paper began. As Alessandra De Marco notes, the “buried commodity” (C) absented from the equation $M-M'$ can reemerge as a sort of “haunting presence,”⁵⁶ and this, I propose, is the biopolitical synthesis of subject and property that, far from empowering the subject, transforms it into a sort of “standing reserve” for the creditors. The figure of “human capital” is therefore marked by liminality, estranged from itself as “capital-with-interest,” as the unmediated source of surplus value. As the *munus* or “ethico-political” threshold of subjectivity is pressed into the service of capital accumulation, the debtor’s existential security is subordinated to “finance’s goal of reducing what will be to what is”;⁵⁷ meanwhile the total immunity of the creditors, the Wall Street manager, the corporate CEOs, is the inevitable obverse of that inescapable exposure that conditions the experience of Lazzarato’s “indebted man.”

It is easy to see, then, how the “conceptual metaphor” of contagion has come to infuse the “affective economy” of neoliberal capitalism, encoding the “crisis of the proper” occasioned by the universalization of indebtedness and its particular biopolitics. The logic of immunitary ownership pressed to extremes is the chiral counterpart of that pervasive dread of contagion, contamination and dissolution that has come to frame nearly every threat to body and body politic alike. Hence a structure of feeling that, whether mediated by the “surrogates” of Mostow’s film or the shambling cadavers of the biohorror genre, foregrounds permutations of liminality and the Uncanny—the latter, as Nicholas Royle has defined it, entailing precisely a “crisis of the proper,” a “critical disturbance . . . of the very idea of personal or private property” and a corresponding “strangeness of framing and borders.”⁵⁸ Contagion as a structure of feeling encodes the contradiction between the “received consciousness” that promises total self-sufficiency through immunitary ownership and a lived experience that is inescapably indebted and precarious. Indeed, there may be no better metaphor for the equation $M-M'$ than the virus itself, or the viral zombie, which seeks less to consume than to replicate itself by estranging the host from its body, transforming it into a source of virus-plus-interest.⁵⁹ If capital has long been allegorized as viral or vampiric, in the total debt economy capital *is* the virus:⁶⁰ the appropriation of its “purchasing power” is coterminous with subjectivation to a “structural power”⁶¹ that reduces the body to an “interest-generating machine.”⁶² Given the identification of ownership with exposure, and the unsustainable top-heaviness of the immunitary structure that leaves all but the wealthiest permanently exposed, it is easy to see how the “chirality” between the closing scenes of *Surrogates* and the more common ones of biohorror encode the paradox of total immunization as the condition for total contagion.

Fredric Jameson long ago labelled conspiracy theory as the “poor person’s cognitive mapping”—an attempt to apprehend, and make sense of, the deterritorializing flows of a global capitalist totality.⁶³ Perhaps, then, the boundary work performed by the dread of

contamination—the defensive drawing and redrawing of boundaries, similar to the work of abjection as famously theorized by Julia Kristeva in her essay *The Powers of Horror*⁶⁴—can be seen as the “indebted person’s cognitive mapping,” an attempt to preserve the subject’s ontological integrity from expropriation, to erect immunitary barriers around the body in keeping with neoliberalism’s exhortations to “manage” one’s own precarity and vulnerability. Such boundary work encodes precisely the breached immunity of the indebted subject, the liminality engendered by the risks and losses it must continually manage as the threshold demarcating bare from disposable life becomes ever more salient to lived experience. To be sure, as the “poor person” in Jameson’s formulation is one not defined by net worth but who substitutes a paranoid fiction for true comprehension, so too is the “indebted person” here a figure for all of us not in the creditor class—if not those in it as well, given the susceptibility of global markets to sudden, systemic collapse.

Though the most obvious political manifestation of the crisis would seem to be, at first blush, the resurgent nativism of the Right—said to hold particular appeal among the so-called “white working class,” if the diagnoses issued by the liberal commentariat are taken at face value—in actual fact no one is (so to speak) immune: indeed, the fantasy of *Surrogates* is nothing if not a fantasy of the relatively privileged, and it is this class also for whom the broadly caricatured Trump voter emerges from the proverbial woodwork, from the darkest corners of the Internet and Appalachia alike. It is also this “urban,” “liberal” class for whom apps like “SketchFactor” and “Ghetto Tracker” were developed, to help them steer clear of inner city neighborhoods (the latter was renamed “Good Part of Town” following accusations of racism). That the Right has no monopoly on the trope of contagion is perhaps nowhere better illustrated, in recent popular culture, than in the darkly satirical early episodes of *American Horror Story: Cult*, in which a white, middle-class, lesbian couple find their insular world breached, following Trump’s election, by a baffling coalition of murderous alt-righters and grotesque, terrifying clowns.⁶⁵

The disarticulation of community from immunity has, it might be said, reached an intolerable extreme. While it is increasingly hard to tell whether the attendant crisis will resolve itself in “business as usual” or something altogether different, we can nonetheless discern from the overall structure of feeling and its popular mediations the extent of that crisis, its depth, and the intensity of its grip on lived experience. One can only hope that whatever lies on the other side allows us to reinvigorate debt as an ethico-political rather than a power relation, and immunity as the introjection of otherness rather than the feverish and futile erection of barriers against it.

Notes

1. *Surrogates*, directed by Jonathan Mostow (Touchstone Home Entertainment, 2009), DVD. [↗](#)
2. Roberto Esposito, *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics*, trans. Timothy Campbell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 39. [↗](#)
3. Vanessa Lemm, “Introduction: Biopolitics and Community in Roberto Esposito,” in Esposito, *Terms of the Political*, 4. [↗](#)
4. Roberto Esposito, “The Immunization Paradigm,” trans. Timothy Campbell, *diacritics* 36, no. 2 (2006): 24. [↗](#)
5. Luigino Bruni, *The Wound and the blessing: Economics, Relationships, and Happiness*, trans. N. Michael Brennan (New York: New City Press, 2012), xx. [↗](#)
6. *Ibid.* [↗](#)
7. Esposito, “Immunization,” 36. [↗](#)

8. Roberto Esposito, "Community, Immunity, Biopolitics," trans. Michela Russo. *E-misferica* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2013), <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-101/esposito>. ↗
9. Vince Gilligan, "The Cat's in the Bag," Season 1, episode 2, *Breaking Bad: The Complete First Season* (Culver City: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2009). DVD. ↗
10. Liane Tanguay, "Sovereign Is He Who Knocks: The Neoliberal State of Exception in American Television," *Key Words: A Journal of Cultural Materialism* 12 (2014): 93–107; for chirality specifically, see page 98–99. ↗
11. Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Amsterdam: Semiotext(e), 2011), 45. ↗
12. Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 47, quoted in Timothy Campbell, "Bios, Immunity, Life: The Thought of Roberto Esposito," *diacritics* 36, no. 2 (2006): 4. ↗
13. Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, 23. ↗
14. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Peterborough: Broadview, 2001), 78. ↗
15. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132. ↗
16. Angela Mitropoulos, "From precariousness to risk management and beyond," *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies* (January 2011), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0811/mitropoulos/en>. ↗
17. Greg Bird and Jonathan Short, "Community, Immunity, and the Proper: An Introduction to the Political Theory of Roberto Esposito," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 18, no. 3 (2013): 1. ↗
18. For expanded treatment, see Liane Tanguay, "The Indebted Man's Cognitive Mapping: Boundaries, Biohorror and the Trump Campaign," in *Age of Debt*, ed. Jeffrey DiLeo, Peter Hitchcock, and Sophia McClennen (Routledge, 2018), forthcoming. ↗
19. Bird and Short, "Community, Immunity, and the Proper," 1. ↗
20. Esposito, "Community, Immunity, Biopolitics." ↗
21. Roberto Esposito, Timothy Campbell, and Anna Paparcone, "Interview," *diacritics* 36, no. 2 (2006): 50, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20204125>. See also Bruni, *The Wound and the Blessing*, 9–10. ↗
22. Matthew Stone, "Roberto Esposito and the Biopolitics of Property Rights," *Social and Legal Studies* 24, no. 3 (2015): 7. ↗
23. Campbell, "Thought," 3. ↗
24. Ibid, 4. ↗
25. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 25. ↗
26. Esposito, "Interview," 55. ↗
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[Bio](#)



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